

SPECIFICATION AMENDMENTS

Please amend the Specification as follows:

Note that these amendments are made based on the Substitute Specification filed December 10, 2004.

Page 6, first paragraph:

In a simple embodiment, the hinge is formed from an opening in the ~~narrow~~ side of the first panel and a matching projection on the complementary ~~narrow~~ side of the second panel. The positively engaging profiles are preferably of such a design that a loading at the top side of the floor panels in the laid condition is transmitted from the top wall of the opening in a first panel to the projection of the second panel and from the projection of the second panel to the wall at the underside of the first panel. In the laid condition, the walls of the opening in the first panel are in contact with the top side and the underside of the projection of the second panel. The top wall of the opening however is in contact with the projection of the second panel only in a short region at the free end of the upper wall of the opening. In that way the structure permits a hinge movement between the panel with the opening and the panel with the projection, with

slight elastic deformation of the walls of the opening. In that way the stiffness of the connection is best matched to an irregular base, which inevitably results in a bending movement between panels that are fastened to each other.

Page 9, fifth paragraph, please delete this paragraph

Page 9, seventh paragraph, please amend the paragraph to read as follows:

Referring to Figure 1 of the drawing a floor covering 1 with the proposed fastening system 2 is composed of a plurality of similar panels 3, 4, 5 and 6. ~~Each panel has a top surface and bottom surface and four narrow sides around the edges of the panel.~~ The first panel 4 has at mutually opposite narrow sides mutually matching retaining profiles 4a and 4b with complementary hook elements 4c and 4d. In that way, it is always possible for a first retaining profile 4a to be joined to a second retaining profile 5b of a second panel 5.

Pages 18-19, bridging paragraph, please delete this paragraph.